

## **Module 3**

# **First Steps on the Journey**



## **Principles of Child Development**



## Why is it important to understand child development?

- To remind us that children are more alike than different.
- To remind us that all children are children first and are not defined by any single characteristic.
- To help us support families in keeping the picture of the “whole child” as they interpret separate pieces of information.
- To ensure that service coordinators are able to provide informed counsel to families.





## Elements that Impact Child Development

- Family context and relationships
- Culture
- Genetics, biochemistry, physiology
- Socio-economic context
- Environment and experiences
- Five developmental domains





## Developmental Domains

These five developmental domains reflect the standard way of dividing the study of child development. IDEA mandates that we look at all these domains.

- Cognitive development
- Physical development, including fine motor, gross motor, and sensory development (vision and hearing)
- Communication development
- Social/emotional development
- Adaptive development



# Principles of Child Development that Guide Decisions about Developmentally Appropriate Practice



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Development occurs in a sequential orderly manner and increases in complexity.

- Understanding predictable sequences of typical development helps the service coordinator participate in developing appropriate outcomes for infants and toddlers.
- While developmental changes are predictable, the meaning associated with them may vary in different cultural contexts.

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Developmental domains are interrelated. Progress in one area of development influences other areas of development.

- For example, when babies become mobile and they experience new things, cognitive development is enhanced.
- Understanding this principle is important for the service coordinator because she can use these interrelationships to plan learning experiences across domains for the child.

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Development results from interplay between genetic or biological influences and environmental experiences.

- Children grow and develop in the context of relationships to their families and caregivers within their own unique culture, with their own unique experiences, while contributing their own unique temperament.

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- The first three years of life appear to be a time when learning occurs most efficiently. This is an optimal period for growth in all developmental areas. Early environments and experiences play a role in brain development as well.
- The service coordinator has the opportunity to support the family as they provide learning experiences for the infant or toddler during this important time of life.



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Development is influenced by multiple social, cultural, and linguistic contexts.

- Maslow (1954) described a hierarchy of needs in which learning cannot occur unless physical and psychological needs for safety and security are met.
- It is important for the service coordinator to support families as they seek to ensure the health and safety of infants and toddlers, because children develop and learn best when these needs are met.

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- Early positive relationships with a limited number of consistent caregivers has a significant impact on development. (Bowlby.1969; Stern.1985; Garbarino et al.1992)
- Every culture structures and interprets children's behavior and development. (Edwards & Gandini.1989; Tobin, Wu, & Davidson. 1989; Rogoff et al.1993)
- Rules of development are the same for all children, but social contexts shape children's development into different configurations. (Bowman, B. 1994. The Challenge of Diversity. Phi Delta Kappan 76 (3): 218-25.)



- Service coordinators need to acknowledge how their personal cultural heritage influences their own perspective.
- Learning to utilize multiple perspectives, in addition to their own, is important when making decisions about children's development.





- Parenting practices vary widely across cultures, resulting in children who develop in different ecological contexts.
- To be effective, early intervention must be based on an understanding of the intervention practice from the parent's perspective given his or her cultural context and history.



Child-rearing practices are part of a larger cultural system. These subsystems mediate a child's developmental experience. (Harkness & Super, 1995; Super & Harkness, 1986)



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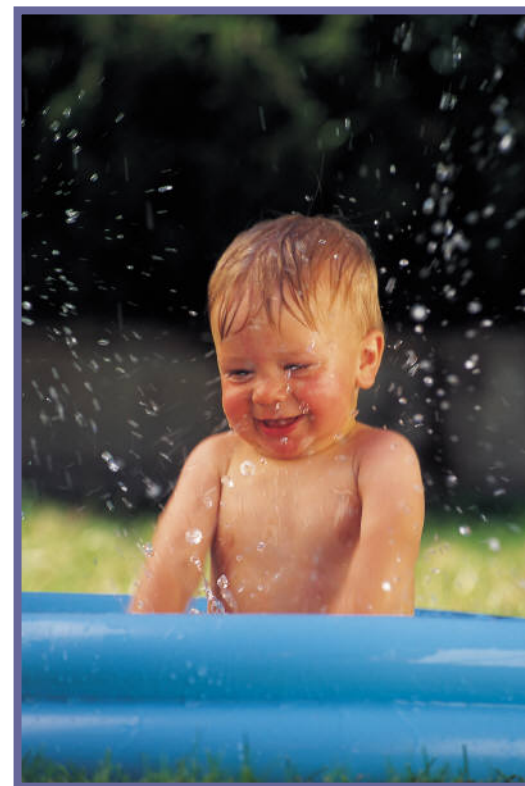
These subsystems include:

- a) Physical and social settings which provide opportunities for specific types of interactions (e.g. when, how, what, with whom);
- b) Customs of child care adapted to the specific ecology and encoded in views of “good parenting,” and
- c) Psychological characteristics of the caregivers (e.g. beliefs, ethnotheories about children and about child-rearing techniques).



- The relative value placed on different developmental outcomes, including outcomes related to interpersonal interaction, affective expression, intelligence, and motor ability, differs across cultures.
- What is valued determines what will be emphasized, channeling the ways in which children will develop.

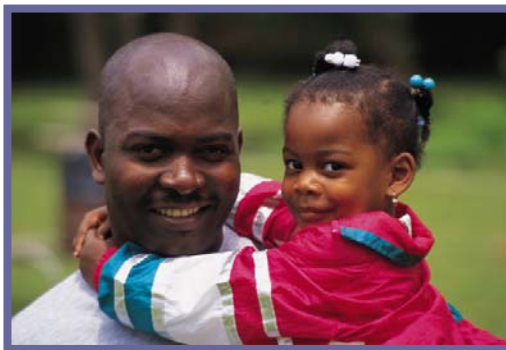
(Harwood, et al., 1995)



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- Cultural beliefs about children with disabilities may differ significantly from those that guide child-rearing practices in general. Views of disability interact with views of child-rearing such that members of a culture may hold different beliefs about appropriate parenting with infants and young children with disabilities than they do with respect to other children.



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## Examples of variations in child-rearing:

### Interactive Play

- Child training might be interpreted as “directiveness” in the West, but is interpreted by other mothers not only as supportive of development, but as a maternal responsibility.
- Praising one’s child is valued in Western literature, but may be devalued in other cultures as conveying that the child is doing well enough and does not need to try to do better.



## Discipline

- “Harshness” attributed to some cultural groups may reflect an effort to teach children to blend into settings dominated by a different, and possibly hostile, majority culture.
- Some cultures use personal storytelling about their toddlers as entertainment and affirmation, while other cultures use them to teach moral and social standards.
- Assumptions about parenting practices can be made only within the context of what is appropriate for persons from that particular culture.



- Culturally-situated parenting goals, roles, and rituals, as well as child-rearing arrangements typical of a cultural group, will determine how families view the goals, roles, and rituals of early intervention.
- “Culture” cannot be inferred from any individual factors, and individuals and families cannot automatically be viewed as exemplars of a particular culture.





- Intervention practices must be designed within a broad framework of assisting children, interventionists, and families to build acceptable, two-way bridges between the context of their own individual systems and the broader societies that form the context of their daily lives.



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Development occurs differently for different children proceeding at varying rates and is demonstrated in different ways.

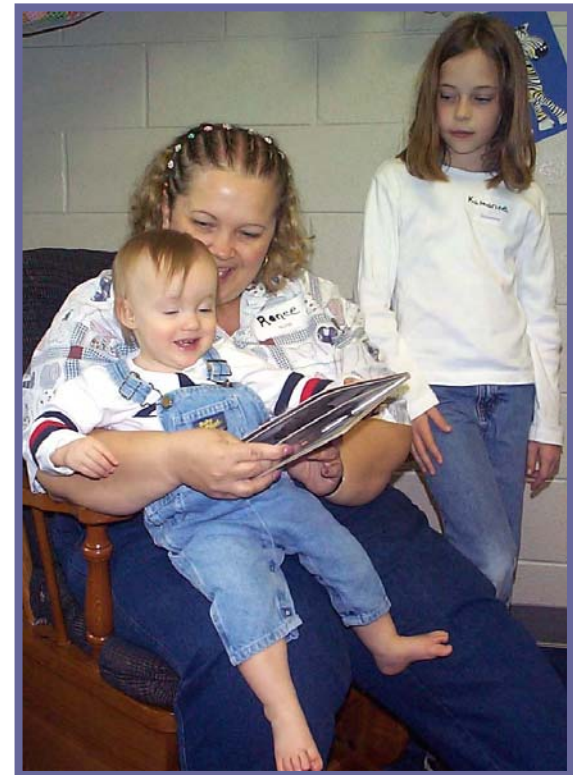
- Each child is unique with their own personality, experience, heritage, learning style, strengths, and needs. Individual variation is to be valued and having high expectations for all children is important.

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- Early intervention focuses on the strengths of families and children, recognizing individual learning rates and styles and acknowledging that there is a wide range of what is considered “typical.”



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Children are active learners who benefit from practicing skills through child-initiated, caregiver-supported play.

- Play provides an avenue for children to practice newly acquired skills and attempt new ones.





## Research confirms that children learn best:

- During natural learning opportunities.
- When they participate in existing and desired activity settings based on the interests and assets of the child and family.
- During planned and spontaneous learning opportunities that occur in real life.







## Research confirms that children learn best:

- When we promote the child's ability to "be and do" by facilitating the family's or care provider's ability to enhance the child's development using what *they* consider important.

(Rush, Shelden, & Hanft, 2003)

- For the child this means *being* with the partners in life who the child wants and needs to be with and *doing* what he wants and needs to do. (Shelden & Rush, 2001)





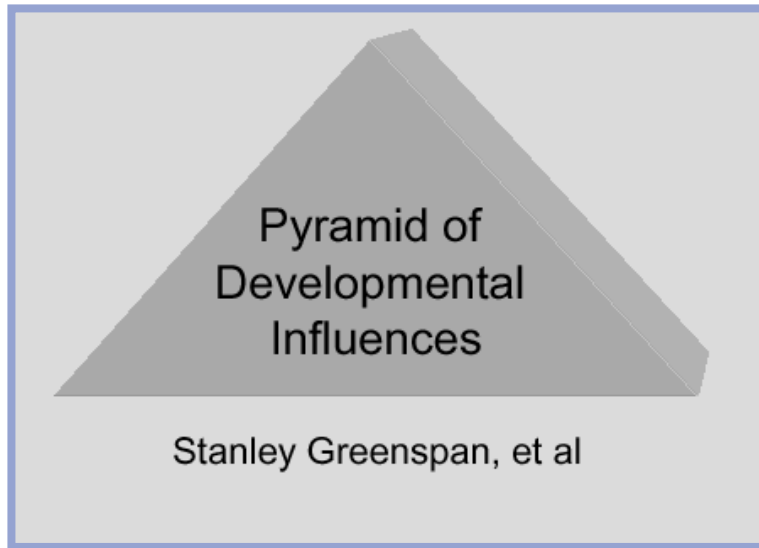


Disability is a difference,  
not a deviance.

When we see deviance,  
we devalue people.

Any difference is only one  
part of who that child is.

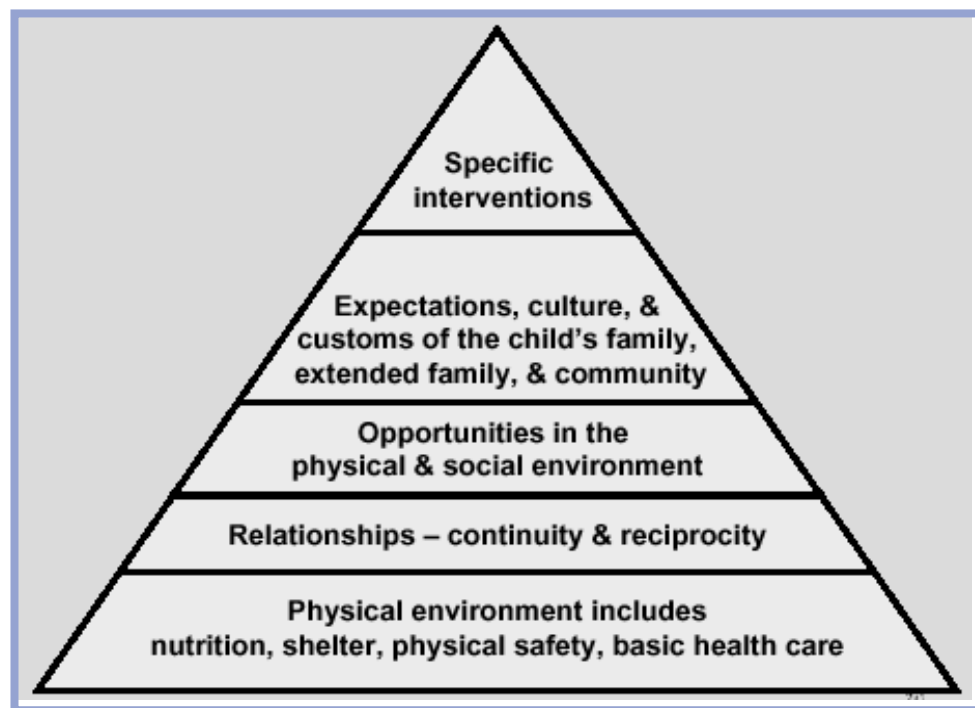




Stanley Greenspan and his colleagues, influenced by developmentalists such as Erikson and clinicians such as Maslow, developed a pyramid of developmental influences that promotes understanding of the role of early intervention supports and services.

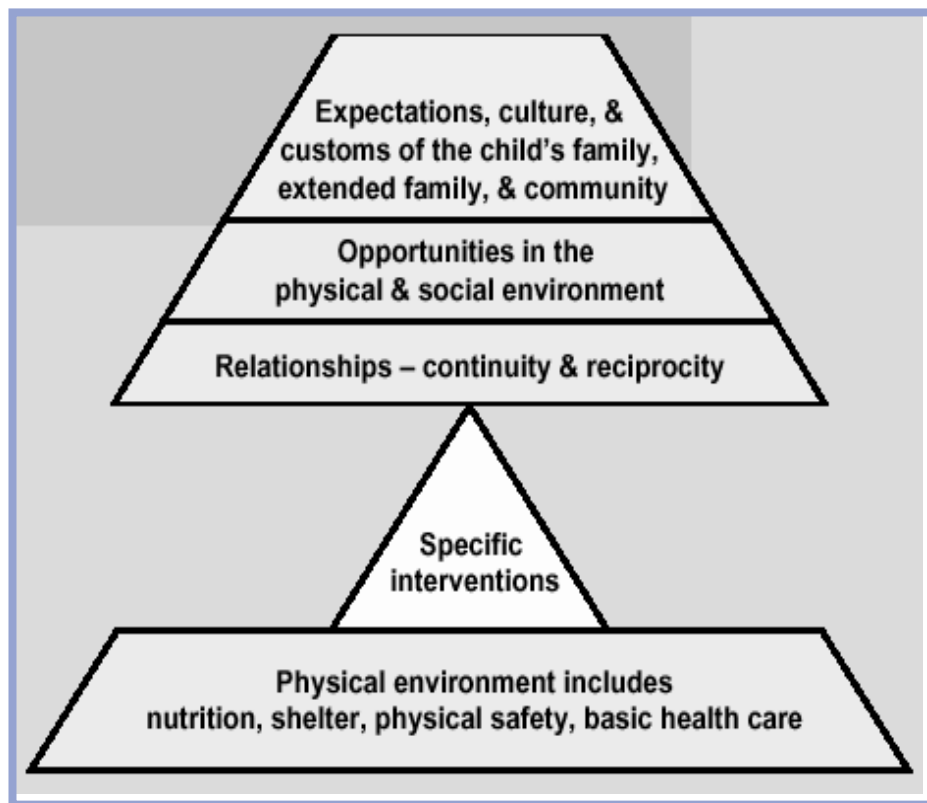


- Each tier has an influence on the development of the child. For example, poor nutrition in the early years has a negative impact on brain development.
- According to this model, specific interventions have the least influence on a child's development.





- Typically we see a greater importance placed on specific interventions. This makes the pyramid look off-balance.
- We need to remember that in the context of these influences, specific interventions are only one piece.





Information about child development enhances parents' capacity to respond appropriately to their children.

Informed parents are better equipped to problem-solve, more confident of their decisions, and more likely to respond sensitively to their children's developmental needs.

L.P. Wandersman. Quoted in "Family-Centered Childcare," Montessori LIFE (Fall 1992), by Ellen Galinsky and Bernice Weissbourd.

